

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BANGKO 09590 040125Z  
ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-06 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /056 W  
-----040453Z 118709 /22

R 040055Z MAY 77  
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1759  
INFO AMCONGEN HONG KONG  
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 9590

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, PINT, CB, TH  
SUBJ: RTG CRACK-DOWN ON SMUGGLING AT ARANYAPRATHET

1. THERE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLE PRESS ATTENTION DURING PAST FEW DAYS ON ARRESTS BEGINNING APR 28 OF SOME FORTY PERSONS (CUSTOMS OFFICIALS, POLICE OFFICERS, MERCHANTS, LOW-LEVEL CIVIL SERVANTS) CONNECTED WITH SMUGGLING OF "STRATEGIC" SUPPLIES (E.G., PETROLEUM, RICE, SALT, MEDICINE) FROM ARANYAPRATHET AREA INTO CAMBODIA. INTERIOR MINISTER SAMAK SUNTHORAWET ANNOUNCED THAT CABINET WILL DECIDE ON SENTENCES TO BE IMPOSED DURING ITS REGULAR METTING ON MAY 4. THERE HAS BEEN MENTION OF USING ARTICLE 21 TO HAND DOWN SEVERE PENALTIES.

2. BANGKOK POST REPORTED MAY 3 THAT SUPREME COMMAND DISCUSSED SUBJ PREVIOUS DAY, DURING WHICH IT WAS ALLEGEDLY STATED THAT CHEATING ARISING OUT OF THE SMUGGLING WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE KC RAIDS ON THREE THAI VILLAGES JAN. 28. PRESS NOTED THAT INVESTIGATION OF THE RAIDS LED TO THE "DISCOVERY" OF THE SMUGGLING.  
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3. SMUGGLING HAS HISTORICALLY OCCURRED BETWEEN ARANYAPRATHET ON THAI SIDE AND POIPET ON THE CAMBODIAN SIDE. AS WE HAVE REPORTED PREVIOUSLY, THERE WAS FAIR AMOUNT OF ILLEGAL (AND LEGAL) TRADE OCCURRING THERE UNTIL BORDER WAS CLOSED ON JAN. 29. THAI WERE WELL AWARE OF, OR PREFERRED TO CLOSE THEIR EYES TO, THE SMUGGLING, WHICH BENEFITTED

ECONOMIES OF BOTH SIDES. CUSTOMS OFFICIAL HAS CONFIRMED OUR VIEW THAT SMUGGLING SINCE THAT DATE HAS BEEN ONLY SMALL SCALE; PRESS IS NOW NOTING REPORTS OF PERSONS CARRYING FIVE LITER CANS OR PLASTIC BAGS OF FUEL INTO CAMBODIA, FOR EXAMPLE.

4. IT IS HARDLY CLEAR WHAT ACCOUNTS FOR RTG'S INTENSE DRIVE AGAINST THE SMUGGLERS AT ONE BORDER CHECKPOINT AT THIS TIME, HOWEVER "STRATEGIC" THE COMMODITIES INVOLVED IN THIS ESSENTIALLY LOCAL TRADE MAY BE. CUSTOMS OFFICIAL PROTESTED THAT LOCAL POLICE AND ADMINISTRATORS HAVE REALLY BEEN SUPERVISING THE BORDER; HE SAID THAT CUSTOMS INVOLVEMENT IN SMUGGLING PURELY THAT OF INDIVIDUAL OFFICERS RATHER THAN ORGANIZED CUSTOMS OPERATION. HE SUGGESTED THAT, IF CONNECTION BETWEEN OFFICIALS AND SMUGGLERS IS PROVEN, PUNISHMENTS CAN BE EXPECTED TO BE SEVERE.

5. THAI LIAISON OFFICIAL AT ARANYAPRATHET TOLD AMERICAN NEWSMAN WHO RECENTLY VISITED BORDER THAT CAMBODIANS HAVE ANOTHER 7,000 TONS OF RUBBER READY TO BRING INTO THAILAND IN EXCHANGE FOR SUCH ITEMS AS JUTE BAGS AND MEDICINES WHICH THEY REQUIRE. NO ONE KNOWS WHEN TRANSACTION WILL OCCUR, AS BORDER CLOSURE APPEARS TO BE OF INDEFINITE DURATION.  
WHITEHOUSE

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## Message Attributes

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